

Stephen Hicks

Questions for Appointees to the Michigan Technological University Board of Control

1. What goals would you like to achieve during your time on the board?

To help execute Michigan Technological University's strategic plan while remaining fiscally strong.

2. In your discussions with the governor's office prior to your appointment, what was the general charge given to you?

Participate on the Board fully and conduct business at the University under the highest professional standards.

3. Over the last 15 or 20 years it seems that all state universities have been expanding programs to try to offer everything to everyone. Do you think this is a good idea?

I cannot address all of the university's programs as I do not have the requisite knowledge. However, I do believe MTU should stay focused on its core strengths and deliver value to its student's studies, particularly in engineering, science, technology, math, applied research and advanced sciences.

4. There is a proposal to separate funding of the state's three largest universities from the other twelve universities. Should the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University be separately funded?

It is my understanding that the Governor's budget recommended parity in university funding, which I'm sure was viewed favorably by the Universities in the Upper Peninsula. I have not seen the specifics of that particular higher education funding proposal. If asked, it is an important question that should be researched, studied and looked into very carefully.

5. Western Michigan University's Board of Trustees recently turned down a proposed 9% tuition increase urging administrators to come up with another solution that's sensitive to Michigan's economic troubles. Later WMU approved a 5.7% increase. Similarly Eastern Michigan accepted a tuition increase with the stipulation that the president cut \$5 million in spending. What solutions did you insist upon before allowing tuition to be increased further?

Higher education helps to support Michigan's economy and quality of life in many ways. Adequately funding the universities and making sure qualified students have an opportunity to receive a quality education are important considerations. If confirmed to serve on the MTU Board of Control, I will take the financial stability of the university very seriously. While I have not reviewed the university's budget in detail, my opinion is that both revenue and cost containment strategies will be important parts of the equation to keep tuition costs down for Michigan's families and maintain the university's financial stability over the long-term.

6. Do you think your university has done a good job of controlling costs? Where would you find additional cost savings?

I have not been privy to the Universities financial situation prior to being nominated recently so I cannot comment on either question. That being said, I'm sure the university, like any business, can do more to control costs.

7. What type of outcomes should the university measure to determine if it is being successful (i.e., graduation rates, how long it took to graduate, job placement in the graduates major, etc.)? Does your university currently do anything like this?

Success is measured by more than graduation rates. Any measurement should be by the ultimate customer, in this case an employer.

8. What is your position on the importance of state universities as authorizers of charter public schools?

A quality K-12 program is essential. Charter public schools are an important option for many families and students in Michigan. Universities may offer a strong advisory or partnership role related to academic standards and achievement. In terms of the universities' as authorizers, I have not faced that question on the board, nor in general policy discussion, so to offer an opinion on whether the role as charter school authorizer is a core part of the universities' mission and equally valued by the charter schools may be premature.

9. What is your opinion of the new constitutional amendment banning the use of race and gender preferences in public university admissions? How will you ensure that the amendment is implemented at your university?

I value diversity in the university community. The same is true as an employer. Diversity of all kinds, race, gender, background, thought and expression enhance knowledge. Michigan voters and the U.S. Supreme Court have taken clear positions on that subject and offered a path for university officials to follow.

10. In which areas of technological research does your university specialize? How effective is your school at commercializing this research to grow the state's economy?

Basic and applied research has been a cornerstone of the university. MTU is widely known for its research in many technologies from engineering (civil, electrical, and mechanical), computer science, and bio-medical to environmental sciences. However, since I have just been nominated recently, I am not privy to specifics on current private sector partnerships and commercialization record.

11. Do you see postsecondary education as mainly a conduit to the work world or is there intrinsic value to pursuing a higher education?

I earned an accounting degree from MTU. I see the value in thinking of higher education as a conduit to the work world and offering intrinsic value especially in learning how to think critically. However, not everyone is going to seek a PHD. Therefore, my experience as an employer would lean toward a university mission that prepares students for their future in the work world and to be successful in life.

12. Do you think K-12 institutions are doing a good job of preparing students for college? Why?

My view on K-12 education is as parent of two young children (Ellie 7 and Collin 5), growing up in Marquette, Michigan. Not every student will go to college. Parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors and other leaders have a role in preparing students. I'm certainly not prepared to offer an insightful opinion on Michigan K-12 institutions as a whole in regard to how well they are preparing students for post secondary education. If approved to the Board of Control, I'm sure my knowledge base in that area will improve with experience.